

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill would establish the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission as a nonprofit charged with creating and implementing a parks and trails plan for greater Minnesota and with awarding grants to parks and trails of regional and statewide significance.

The Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program funded by the parks and trails fund (one of the four funds established by the "Legacy Amendment" which increased the state's sales tax and dedicated the receipts for various purposes) administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would be eliminated and the grants would be awarded by the new commission.

Section

1 Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission.

Subd. 1. Establishment; purpose. Establishes the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission as a nonprofit corporation to provide system planning and grants to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of statewide or regional significance.

Subd. 2. Commissioner. Provides the membership of the commission as follows: (1) one representative from each Association of Minnesota Counties district outside the seven-county metropolitan area; and (2) one representative from each Department of Natural Resources administrative region outside of the seven-county metropolitan area.

Section

Subd. 3. Duties. Establishes the duties of the commission which include developing a parks and trails plan for greater Minnesota and distributing grants to counties and cities.

Subd. 4. Grant priorities. Requires the commission to incorporate the recommendations of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan and the Minnesota State and Regional Parks Trails Legacy Plan when awarding grants. Requires the commission to determine grant amounts through an adopted merit-based evaluation process and exempts the adoption of the process from rulemaking requirements.

Subd. 5. Staff. Allows the commission to hire staff. The staff are not considered state employees, but may participate in the state retirement, deferred compensation, insurance, and other plans applying to state employees. States that they are subject to regulation by the state Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Commission.

Subd. 6. Bylaws. Requires the commission to adopt bylaws and public them in the State Register.

Subd. 7. Place of business. Requires the commission to maintain its business in the state.

Subd. 8. Chair. Requires the commission to annually elect a chair from its members.

Subd. 9. Meetings. Requires the commission to meet at least twice a year and subjects the meetings to the open meeting laws under chapter 13D.

Subd. 10. Conflict of interest. Prohibits members of the commission or its staff from participating in or voting on a decision relating to an organization that the person has either a direct or indirect financial interest with.

Subd. 11. No benefit to private individuals or corporations. Prohibits the commission from affording monetary or economic gain to a private individual, firm, or corporation except for the payment for goods and service provided. Prohibits any part of net income from the commission to be distributed or otherwise benefit an individual.

Subd. 12. Funds. Allows the commission to accept gifts, grants, or contributions from any source and to sell, exchange, or otherwise dispose of and invest the money or property it is given. Requires expenditures of more than \$25,000 to be approved by the full commission.

Subd. 13. Accounts; audits. Requires the commission to pay the costs of an independent annual audit of its books and records by the legislative auditor.

Subd. 14. Definition. Defines “commission” for purposes of the section.

Section

- 2** **Funding.** Amends § 160.266, subd. 5. Technical.
- 3** **Appropriation.** Appropriates an unspecified amount from the parks and trails fund (one of the four legacy funds) to the commissioner of natural resources to contract with the commission to carry out the duties of the commission (developing and implementing a parks and trails plan and awarding grants). Limits the amount that may be spent on the parks and trails plan to 2.5 percent each year. States that appropriations after fiscal year 2015 must be made directly to the commission.
- 4** **Repealer.** Repeals § 85.535, the existing parks and trails fund grant program administered by the DNR that awards grants to parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.